

**We Claim:**

1. A sanitary napkin for use by a woman for  
feminine hygiene and adapted to be worn in an  
5 undergarment, comprising a main body portion having a  
liquid permeable body faceable cover layer, a liquid  
impermeable garment faceable barrier layer, an absorbent  
element therebetween, the main body portion further  
having first and second longitudinal edges opposite each  
10 other defining a width dimension, a central longitudinal  
axis parallel to the longitudinal edges, first and  
second transverse edges opposite each other defining a  
length dimension;

15 a central region having first and second distal  
ends opposite each other defining a length that is  
sufficient to cover the woman's labia majora in use;

20 a first end region, extending from the first distal  
end of the central region to the first transverse edge  
and being adapted to cover at least a portion of the  
woman's mons pubis in use;

25 a second end region, extending from the second  
distal end of the central region to the second  
transverse edge and being adapted to cover at least a  
portion of the woman's posterior perineum in use; and

at least two longitudinally extending hinges located substantially within the center region adjacent each longitudinal edge, each hinge adapted to provide a longitudinally extending preferential bending axis, said hinge being spaced apart along at least a portion of their length, wherein at least one hinge has a radius of curvature and an adjacent hinge is substantially straight.

2. The sanitary napkin according to claim 1 wherein first hinge has a radius of curvature and is closer to the longitudinal centerline than the second hinge that is substantially straight.

3. The sanitary napkin according to claim 1 wherein, the first hinge is substantially straight and is closer to the longitudinal centerline than the second hinge that has a radius of curvature.

4. The sanitary napkin according to claim 1 wherein the first hinge is separated from the second hinge along a substantial portion of their respective lengths but are co-terminous and contact one another at their respective distal ends.

5. The sanitary napkin according to claim 1 wherein the hinges are formed from include a material in an amount sufficient to impart additional structural

rigidity relative to an adjacent region in the absorbent structure, the material being selected from the group consisting of a sphagnum-moss containing insert, a densified channel, a strip of polymeric foam, and combinations thereof.

6. The sanitary napkin according to claim 5 wherein the hinges are formed as densified channels.

7. The sanitary napkin according to claim 6 wherein the density of each channel is at least 0.5 g/cc.

8. The sanitary napkin according to claim 1 further comprising a densified end channel in at least one transverse end.

9. The sanitary napkin according to claim 8 wherein said densified end channel is spaced apart from said hinges by at least 3 mm.

10. A sanitary napkin for use by a woman for feminine hygiene and adapted to be worn in an undergarment, comprising a main body portion having a liquid permeable body faceable cover layer, a liquid impermeable garment faceable barrier layer, an absorbent element therebetween, the main body portion further having first and second longitudinal edges opposite each

other defining a width dimension, a central longitudinal axis parallel to the longitudinal edges, first and second transverse edges opposite each other defining a length dimension;

5

a central region having first and second distal ends opposite each other defining a length that is sufficient to cover the woman's labia majora in use;

10

a first end region, extending from the first distal end of the central region to the first transverse edge and being adapted to cover at least a portion of the woman's mons pubis in use;

15

a second end region, extending from the second distal end of the central region to the second transverse edge and being adapted to cover at least a portion of the woman's posterior perineum in use; and

20

at least two longitudinally extending hinges located substantially within the center region adjacent each longitudinal edge, each hinge adapted to provide a longitudinally extending preferential bending axis, said hinge being spaced apart along at least a portion of their length, wherein said at least two hinge each have a radius of curvature and wherein one hinge has a radius of curvature greater than an adjacent hinge and wherein

25

the sanitary napkin preferentially bends along the hinge.

11. The sanitary napkin according to claim 10  
5 wherein a first hinge has a greater radius of curvature relative to a second hinge and is closer to the longitudinal centerline than the second hinge that has a lower radius of curvature relative to the first hinge.

12. The sanitary napkin according to claim 10  
10 wherein the first hinge has a lower radius of curvature and is closer to the longitudinal centerline than the second hinge that has a greater radius of curvature relative to the first hinge.  
15